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REMARKS OF D. C. ROBBINS,

OF NEW YORK,

UPON THE LAST MEETING OF THE AMERICAN PHARMACEUTICAL ASSOCIATION, WHICH WAS HELD IN PHILADELPHIA, IN SEPTEMBER,

AND THE

CENTENNIAL EXPOSITION

IN CONNECTION WITH



Pharmacy in the United States.

New York, October, 1876.

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To PHARMACISTS AND DRUGGISTS

THROUGHOUT OUR OWN AND OTHER STATES:

Gentlemen:—At the recent meeting of the American Pharmaceutical Association in Philadelphia, in September, following upon the reading of the report upon the sophistication of Drugs, and the defective character of many Pharmaceutical preparations in market, by Mr. Eberbach, of Ann Arbor, Michigan, all of which was very proper and valuable so far as it went, I took occasion to criticise the competency of our Pharmaceutical schools for proper analytical work, and denounced the practice of many professors committing such work to mere youths, without experience, and with no competent instructors, as also the publication of such papers in journals, like the American Journal of Pharmacy, which is published in Philadelphia, because the work of the analyst is really the most difficult of any, requiring, (to quote the language of one of the most distinguished scientists and chemists, Prof. Hoffman, of Berlin), "*a peculiar fitness and special preparation, to which there should be supplemented the skill of an expert,*" the intention being to censure the practice which our schools have, of parading their work and their pupils before the public, when in fact there did not exist, in my opinion, in most of our schools, suitable arrangements or competent teachers to conduct such work as it should be done for the public eye.

I was fully prepared for this statement, both because in the analytical department of our own establishment, we have the services of a gentleman, who first graduated in Germany as a Pharmacist, afterwards as a Doctor of



Philosophy, and then served for years as pupil and first assistant in the Government Analytical Laboratory in Berlin, under Sonnenschein, the celebrated analyst; and because occasion had been taken to examine from time to time, a number of papers which had appeared in the American Journal of Pharmacy.

Of various papers examined, it was found that those of the Philadelphia College were all inferior, and so, to make a test case, there was selected, as the best of this class, a paper by Mr. Schrank, which took the prize in the New York College of Pharmacy in 1875, as the best essay of the season, the student himself graduating at the head of his class.

This paper was reviewed by our Mr. Charles A. Robbins, Ph. D., a graduate of the University of Jena, in Prussian Saxony, and afterwards carefully examined by two of the most competent men in the profession, after which it was tendered to the American Pharmaceutical Association for reading or publication, and I was informed, at the Convention, that it could not be published or read because of personal remarks in the paper, when it did not contain a single offensive personal allusion, being, in fact in entirety, a critical and technical scientific examination of the processes and methods, adopted by the pupil, Mr. Schrank, which it proved to be worthless, and so by implication, only, censured the school which issued the paper and the journal which published it.

This paper at present is the property of the American Pharmaceutical Association, to be published if they see fit in their forthcoming proceedings, or failing this, it will be published elsewhere, as also my remarks at the Convention, in full, if they can be obtained, and if not in substance, from memory and from notes taken at the meeting.

The subject of this address, was the absolute necessity

of securing a higher grade of instruction in our schools, as well as the duty of impressing upon our teachers a sense of their responsibilities as teachers, in the wrong done to the pupil by persuading him that he had performed a work of merit, when in fact his work was valueless.

This address, which was well received at the meeting, and commended, I am told will also not be published, for a special Committee was appointed on the last day of the session, while I was absent, with instructions to throw out all objectionable matter.

By a singular coincidence, on the very day this address was being delivered in Philadelphia, there was being published in London a false and malicious, as well as needless statement from the pen of Prof. Remington, of Philadelphia, in regard to our exhibit in the Centennial, which is so characteristic that it is submitted with correspondence.

At some future time, it is intended to collect and publish, in pamphlet form, this review of the inaugural essay of Schrank, in the New York School of Pharmacy, as also my remarks upon the character of present instruction in our Pharmaceutical Schools, to which will be added some thoughtful and excellent remarks, from Mr. Gehe, of Dresden, Saxony, upon our Centennial display and industrial displays in general, Mr. Gehe being recognized as one of the leading minds in the Drug trade, as also the head of the most extensive establishment of the kind in existence.

In conclusion, your attention is called to annexed correspondence, while I remain,

Very respectfully yours,

D. C. ROBBINS.

New York, Oct., 1876.

*To the Proprietors of the "Chemist & Druggist." No. 44
Cannon Street, London.*

GENTLEMEN:—We are in due receipt of your valued favor of the 21st ultimo, enclosing circular, which will have early attention.

We noticed in your issue of the 15th idem a very singular report on our Centennial Exhibition, as it is called, by your correspondent, Prof. Remington of Philadelphia, which is so full of misstatements of fact and which displays such *petty malice*, that it deserves notice.

Thus: "*McKesson & Robbins, New York, have a very small display considering the amount of business which this firm are reputed to do. The drugs are exhibited in ordinary 8 oz. bottles, and fall behind in quality compared with many other specimens. They are pushing the sale of Gelatine-Coated pills, which they claim to be superior to any other kind of coating, but the great majority of the trade are not ready to believe gelatine more soluble than sugar; hence their success is but limited. In this case is to be seen some fluid extracts, elixirs, &c.*

Now, the facts are, that the display made in Philadelphia in the Centennial Exhibition by our house, is very nearly the same, in form and in design, as was made in the Vienna Exhibition, which took place in 1873, for which we were awarded by the Austrian government two separate medals of merit: one for the exhibition of a full line of specimens of crude vegetable medicinal drugs, all of which were indigenous within the United States, and the other for Chemical and Pharmaceutical products pertaining to or derived from these goods. The main intention being to exhibit samples of medicinal products, which are peculiar to our country as *known in commerce*.

These samples were exhibited in Vienna in bottles of

limited quantities, because, the quantity furnished was deemed sufficient for the purpose in view, and because, a large, bulky, numerous display of crude drugs was not deemed advisable for many reasons. It resulted as follows: in Vienna, our house was the only house that made any general or similar exhibition of American varieties, and in Philadelphia we also stand alone, for, as far as we can ascertain, ours is the only house making a full display of *commercial varieties* or otherwise, with the single exception of Messrs. Wallace Brothers, of Statesville, North Carolina, who make a Scientific and Botanical display in great variety, the distinction being that Messrs. Wallace Bros. are gatherers and preparers of a large line of vegetable drugs, while our house are large general dealers in all kinds of drugs and druggists' articles.

The assertion then of your correspondent, J. P. Remington, that our exhibit of American indigenous drugs falls behind in quality compared with *many other specimens*, is a willfully erroneous statement. The assertion, also, that our house is pushing the sale of Gelatine-Coated Pills, *under the plea that Gelatine is more soluble than Sugar* is quite false, because the ready solubility of Sugar in either cold or warm water, while Gelatine will only dissolve readily in warm water, is well understood, as also the fact, that we consider Gelatine covering to be superior to Sugar, because of its less solubility, for the reason that Gelatine can be applied to soft mass so as to preserve it, while sugar cannot; also that the objection to sugar coating does not consist in the coating of sugar, but in the fact that so delicate and brittle and soluble a coating as a thin covering of sugar requires the pill mass to be thoroughly dried by artificial heat, which is a great injury to delicate preparations containing alkaloids and other substances, besides rendering the dried mass quite insoluble as opposed to soft mass.

We are large manufacturers of Sugar-Coated Pills, as well as Gelatine-Coated Pills, and therefore thoroughly understand the necessities attending the manufacture of both, while from our position, as the largest distributing-house in medicinal goods in the country, we are better able to state facts about the consumption of goods, than our so called Professor of Pharmacy in Philadelphia, who is merely a proprietor of a small apothecary shop in that city, or our so called Professor Peter W. Bedford of New York, another correspondent of yours, whose main business—that for which he receives his principal compensation, is that of a traveling salesman or drummer for one of our smaller houses in the jobbing trade.

Sugar-Coated Pills were first introduced in the American market in quantities, about 20 years since, by Messrs. Tilden & Co., of New Lebanon, New York, who are very large and respectable manufacturers of these products at the present time.

Gelatine-Coated Pills have only been made in quantity, by patented machinery (as each pill requires to be finished separately), within the past four years, and may be said to be only recently introduced, but they are rapidly displacing Sugar-Coated, and coming into general favor among distinguished Physicians as well as Pharmacists.

In the last American Pharmaceutical Convention, which was held in Philadelphia a few days since, a valuable paper was read by one of our most distinguished Pharmacists, Edward R. Squibb, M. D., on the administration of Phosphorus, and Gelatine-Coating was recommended for Phosphorus Pills, if a coating was desired.

The truth is, the condition of Pharmacy, as a science or a pursuit, as it exists in our United States, should be better understood in Europe than it appears to be. Ours is a new country and sparsely settled as compared with yours, and so, throughout our vast territory, we are com-

elled to avail ourselves of such education as can be procured, and titles are cheap and common—the usage being to call every person a Professor who aspires to the office of a teacher—there is no recognized standard of qualification for a Professorship in our country. The Professor, with us, is the man who talks or can talk to an audience, and while we have many men of superior merit, we have the common experience—the consummate talker is apt to be more or less of an ignoramus, and quite frequently, a consummate Ass.

About a year since, Prof. Remington, as he is called in Philadelphia, for the want of a more scientific subject, took upon himself to read an article in the Pharmaceutical convention in Boston, upon Pills in general, in favor of Sugar-Coated Pills in particular; he commenced his statement in regard to Gelatine-Coated Pills by remarking that these should be more properly called Glue-Coated Pills, with intent, no doubt, to substitute a disagreeable name for a popular scientific term, "*Gelatine*," while the term Glue, as is well known, should only be properly applied to impure Gelatine, in which he showed either the grossest ignorance of a common term, or the most pitiful unfairness and dishonesty.

In conclusion, you may be assured that your correspondents, J. P. Remington of Philadelphia and Peter W. Bedford of New York, are samples of a class quite too common in our, as yet, undeveloped and imperfectly educated country, and we only take the pains to inform you, because, as the result of 50 years establishment as dealers and manufacturers, we have a considerable European, as well as American reputation to conserve. Such individuals as Remington in Philadelphia and Bedford in New York, are very well understood at home, while the facts about Pharmaceutical education, as it exists with

us, are not as well understood in Europe as they should be, hence this letter, which is very respectfully submitted.

We remain, gentlemen,

Yours truly,

McKESSON & ROBBINS,

New York, 5th Oct., 1876.

Extract from Mr. GEHE'S Circular.

We submit a single extract from Mr. Gehe's circular, for the careful consideration of American Pharmacists.

"Under the impression that they must do something extraordinary, and to attract the attention of the visitor, it has been the aim of the mass of exhibitors to erect immense constructions, which are entirely useless and made only for the exhibition, or to display *large* quantities of an article, carefully arranged in artistic groups, and it is not a rare occurrence to find that these cases, &c., cost many times as much as the article exhibited in them, and from these facts, one must say that the encouragement of science, which was the original purpose of International Exhibitions, is hardly to be noticed."

While writing this pamphlet matter, we have had a very interesting interview with two Commissioners from the French Government; they came into our establishment with a memorandum of our exhibit in Vienna, as also in Philadelphia, where it seems we have been awarded a recognition, and requested the privilege of viewing our establishment, and taking some notes. Their visit appeared to give them much pleasure; in leaving, they informed us that it was the particular wish of their Government, that they should visit in person the establishments of persons represented in the Centennial, and they gave a very humorous account of their visits to many places, where the proprietor appeared to have less Capital in his business than in the Exhibition. The views of these gentlemen were in full accord with those of Mr. Gehe, and they left, assuring us that we would be specially invited to contribute to the coming French Exposition. We were much amused at a trifling circumstance, which occurred in presenting themselves; they exhibited with their Credentials, their ticket of Free admission to the Centennial, which was literally so riddled with punch holes, that an apology was tendered, the gentlemen said they had tried Philadelphia but did not like the city, they knew the reason why the Centennial was held in Philadelphia very well, but it was no place for such an Exhibition; New York, said they, is the place, we like New York, and we do not like Philadelphia, because it is too **FINAL**, which provoked a smile, but called for no explanation. We leave the reader to infer what the word **FINAL** probably meant.

THE DECADENCE OF PHILADELPHIA PHARMACY.

There is for Philadelphia an ominous import in this description of the discriminating Frenchman, "Philadelphia is too final," for to become final is to return to the embrace of the infinite, and lose our place in this moving world, where unceasing change is the order of nature. The Exposition of to-day, in which she glories, and in which we all rejoice because as intelligent foreigners say, it has introduced us to Europe,—our excellencies as well as our defects,—more understandingly than ever before, is to be her *final* Exposition. To Philadelphia of the past, American Pharmacy owes a debt of grateful recollection, Philadelphia was, as she is yet called, the Quaker City, and out of the training of this sect, came naturally her former excellence as a center for Medical and Pharmaceutical instruction. This sect was always distinguished for its devotion to peaceful pursuits, its religion of humanity as opposed to dogmatism, its protest against any specially educated clergy, its disapproval of all legal contentions, its practical opposition to all the educated professions, except the single one of medicine and surgery, out of which came her excellency in Pharmacy, which is only a collateral branch in medication. But Quakerism itself is fast becoming a recollection, a finality, because we must accept all the tendencies which pertain to excellence in any direction. The Quaker sect was the most remarkable that came of the ferment of the great reformation, it rejected all precedents as well as emblems of worship, and relied absolutely upon the sufficiency of spiritual communion; in practical affairs, its code was equally absolute, it disclaimed the pristine advice to become all things to all men, it asserted that the end never justified questionable means. "The right always before the expedient," hence among all sects, the single record of this sect in our

country, in regard to the institution of slavery, which it never condoned. For such a sect, propagandism was an essential condition of existence, it must convert mankind to its own lofty ideals, or withdraw from the world, and pass into isolation, exclusiveness, selfishness, and perish as a branch withdrawn from the vine, an instructive Commentary on the solidarity of the race.

Philadelphia was formerly famous for her Schools, but to-day it has become a proverb in Europe, when an American presents himself with the title of Ph. D., (Doctor of Philosophy), which is deemed a high honor abroad, that it is safe to enquire whether this title means a Philadelphia Doctor, or whether he is really a graduate of one of those European Universities who only confer this title for scientific discovery in some direction. To accept isolation, selfishness, is to invite certain ruin, the decline of all manhood, the sure decay of all moral worth as well as moral perceptions. A man must cherish justice, and follow truth wherever these may lead, or he is likely to pass through a course of infamy into moral insanity, a loss of all moral perception, than which there can be no greater misfortune.

There can be no real prosperity, where there is no moral health, where all sense of common decency appears to be lost. It was a painful experience to walk into the rooms of the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy, as a member of the American Pharmaceutical Association, and receive a Philadelphia pill circular at the door, endorsed by a Philadelphia professor, and find the same pill proprietor in the Chair at the head of the meeting, with the professor at his right hand ; but I forbear, because the case is too serious for further comment, and we may depend upon the coming of the end. *Finality*,—that ominous word which is at once a warning and a refuge. At some future period, I propose to speak more individually, of the per-

sonnel of the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy, as it exists, for no fact was more clearly exhibited in the last Pharmaceutical Convention, than the lamentable inferiority of the Philadelphia College of to-day, in character—in men, for it should be constantly kept in view, that the main object of all teaching in all directions—is manhood.



